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Meetings to address beach-project questions

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LONG BEACH ISLAND-Residents confused or concerned about the easements necessary to begin the islandwide beach replenishment project can ask state and federal authorities questions at a meeting next month.

Representatives from the state Department of Environmental Protection, the state attorney general's office and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will hold two presentations on the project at the Long Beach Township municipal building Dec. 13.

The first presentation will be at 2 p.m. and the second at 6 p.m. Both presentations will be followed by a question-and-answer session for the public, said Dave Rosenblatt, administrator of the DEP's Office of Engineering and Construction.

The six island municipalities asked approximately 800 beachfront landowners to sign a notice giving Army Corps of Engineers and the DEP an easement on their oceanside property so that the project can proceed. The easements will give contractors access to the beach and establish permanent public access points to the beach, Rosenblatt said.

Rosenblatt said the meetings are intended to keep residents as informed as possible about exactly what the project entails.

"Most people have been familiar with at least part of the project and what is required by homeowners and municipality," Rosenblatt said. But, "the closer we get to construction the more questions they are going to have."

The Army Corps of Engineers requires that a municipality have public-access points every half mile, while the DEP calls for public-access points every quarter mile. Rosenblatt said last week that the township would have to follow the DEP's rules to participate in the longterm project, which would replenish and maintain the shoreline of the 18-mile barrier island. The total cost for the project is \$159 million.

Rosenblatt said officials would also discuss concerns over sand dunes blocking the ocean view of some beachfront landowners.

"That's always a concern with the dunes. I can say that this is a possibility at some locations," said Rosenblatt, though he could not say where specifically. "It might block the view from part of the first floor but not the second, third or fourth floor."

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